The Builder.

No. CCXXII.

SATURDAY, MAY 8, 1847.

A GREATER crowd never assembled within the rooms of the Royal Academy on a "first day," than was found in them on Monday last, and we will venture to say that those composing it had never seen there a better collection of modern works of art than is now presented.

It should always be remembered, that the paintings there exhibited are, with some few exceptions, the produce of the year.

Some of our travelled friends, who would shew how fastidious knowledge has made them, should especially be reminded of this. The collections they have visited of works of by-gone masters, both at home and abroad, are the results of many years,—the best examples of the best men, shifted and sorted and weeded. When they institute comparisons between this and these, they do injustice.

Creswick, Etty, Herbert, J. P. Knight, Lee, Leslie, Maclise, Mulready, Pickersgill, Roberts, Stanfield, Webster, Witherington, exhibit fine examples of their right to the position they have attained; and the rising men, R. Ansdell, Elmore, Egg, Frith, Frost, F. Goodall, A. Johnston, Kennedy, Lance, F. R. Pickersgill, Redgrave, Lear, Linton, E. M. Ward, and many others, tread worthily forward.

The number of pictures returned for want of room must have been very great. More room is necessary, and must be had. The demand for modern works of art has immensely increased within these last few years, yet the number of works exhibited remains the same. We have seen several excellent pictures which have been returned, and more that are out of proper sight, though in the rooms; and know what loss and privation will be the sad consequence to their authors.

It is quite time, as we have before urged, that the national collection should be removed to some fitting structure, where it will have room to grow, and that the present building should be wholly appropriated to the Academy and annual exhibition.

In the Academy itself, some move is looked for, and it may be hoped, will shortly be made. We trust that the time is not far distant, when amongst other improvements, the exhibition will be thrown open freely to the masses, at certain periods. That this may be done safely has been clearly proved; the value of it must surely be evident to all who are friendly to national progress. The council of the Art-Union of London in their last report, justly remark, "that the annual exhibition of works of Fine Art, opened by the Society, gratuitously, to the public, may be regarded as one of the most important results of the Association;" and that "they would gladly see greater facilities for the enjoyment of works of art elsewhere afforded to the people generally, than now exist."

On this point we are ourselves most anxious, and we would suggest to the "Society of British Artists," that they should *set the example*, by admitting the public gratuitously to their exhibition, for a certain number of days, at the close of the season. It would be a graceful return for the charter of incorporation recently granted to them.

We are wandering, however, from the walls of the Academy.

The architectural room is, in some degree, an improvement on that of last year. The number of drawings admitted is greater, too, although they are still over-laden by "Coquetry and Gallantry," "Rural Courtships," and "Charity," pictured in bright colours.

No. 1244, "South East view of the Church of St. Nicholas, at Hamburgh, now under erection," by G. G. Scott, and 1247, an interior view of the same church, are the most important drawings in the room. The design appears to have been altered slightly since the lithograph of it was published; if carried out efficiently, it will prove honourable to our age.

S. Beazley exhibits "New Improvements on the Castle Hill, at Dover" (1077), shewing a crescent of residences in the castellated Gothic style, of some importance.

R. and J. Brandon have several drawings: "Portswood Church, Southampton" (1102), an early-decorated structure, with the tower at the east end of the south side of the nave. "The Chancel of St. Martin's Church, Leicester" (1134). A Tudor "House, now erecting at Reigate" (1157), and others.

S. Smirke shews "The New Carlton Clubhouse" (1,109), originally entrusted to the late Mr. Basevi and himself, an engraving of which with some particulars will be found in our present number.

Wyatt and Brandon have several clever designs: "A Chapel erecting in the City of London and Tower Hamlets Cemetery" (1117), an octagon Norman building after the model of the Templars' churches; "Mansion erecting at Craig-y-nos, Breconshire" (1196), very picturesque in arrangement; and "Perspective View of the Maria Antonia Railway Station, now building at Florence."

D. Macatta has been engaged in erecting a large mansion at St. Michael, in the Azores, Italian in style, with a campanile, and exhibits a view of it nicely set forth.

T. Bury has two very good drawings of "Battersea New Church, now erecting from the designs of Lee and Bury" (1187 and 1188). The style is the decorated.

L. W. Collman, in 1213, "View of a Library," shews an excellent piece of decoration.

J. J. Scoles exhibits a "View of the (Roman Catholic) Church of the Immaculate Conception, erecting near Berkeley-square," a clever design, to which justice is scarcely done by the drawing.

J. K. Colling sets forth the "Interior of Knupton Church, restored," wherein the painting of the roof is shewn as it *is*, and not as it would be seen, and therefore has rather a flaunting appearance.

"A Bird's Eye View of the Birmingham Cemetery," by Hamilton and Medland (1148), shews that the style adopted is pointed; that the church, with tower, has a range of catacombs on each side of it; and that a part of the land in front of the church is excavated to get other catacombs.

1108, by A. Johnson, is one of the best of the "Designs for an Architectural Institute," submitted in the competition for the Royal Medal.

C. J. Richardson has a "Riding School," (1132) the roof of which is ingenious.

G. Alexander exhibits a design for "Almshouses" (1164) and a "New Church (decorated) now erecting at Salton Waldron, near Shaftesbury."

1234, "St. Kyran's Roman Catholic College, now erecting at Kilkenny," by W. D. Butler, seems a very large building, in pointed style, of very indifferent design.

We shall return to the room with more care before long.

THE DESIGNS FOR THE ARMY AND NAVY CLUB.

Such a competition as that for the new building for the Army and Navy Club, the result of which we have already announced, has not occurred during several years past. Since that of the Royal Exchange, competitions have either been confined amongst a few selected individuals, or been comparatively unimportant. In the present case, the object was one which allowed great scope for embellishment,—the amount allotted being in no respect inadequate, whilst the site, though requiring the full exercise of skill in arrangement, was favourable for the display of art. The result is, that sixty-nine designs have been submitted; out of which some call for high praise, and a large proportion, in some point or other, are well worthy of examination. We have devoted more time and attention to them than we are usually able to spare for any single object, from the desire of forming some opinion on the propriety of the selection. The difficulty, notwithstanding, we have found to be great, and, had we required such an argument, would have convinced us of the impossibility of any equitable decision from individuals not engaged in the practice of architecture. Coming to this inquiry with all the facility which we necessarily possess, of understanding plans and elevations—things which to nearly all the gallant judges, as indeed we heard some of them affirm, must be perfectly incomprehensible—accustomed as we are to the various considerations affecting convenience, space, light, and sound construction in buildings of this nature, we yet felt that though we started with these advantages, we had still a task which required great deliberation, and a knowledge of the peculiarities of the object and the site, scarcely possessed without having devoted the time and labour required from a competitor. Indeed, without now coming to a definite conclusion upon that subject, we would say, that there is strong ground for the opinion held by many, that the competitors themselves are the proper judges.

It may be well to state, that the ground has a frontage of about 100 feet on the west side of St. James's square, and of the street which enters Pall Mall, and a frontage of about 60 feet in Pall Mall; but there is a long piece extending westwards from the north end of the principal portion, indispensible for the extent of accommodation required, although very awkwardly situated as regards the provision for light, and the rights of adjoining owners. In most of the designs there is an entresol between the basement and the ground floor, the kitchen department being in the basement, we believe, in every design but one. In some of the designs this basement story would be very ill lighted, for in one or two cases only has the mezzanine story been raised to a high level. Many of the designs have but two stories above, apparent in the decoration, but nearly all have a second floor arranged in some way. The morning-room being desirable with windows looking into Pall Mall, most of the entrances are on the east, and the "coffee-room" generally extends from the north side of the doorway, westward, in some cases for 80 feet and upwards.—In general character of decoration, this being one of those occasions in which it may be desirable to record progress, we think there is evidence of considerable advance in architectural taste. Notwithstanding that there is an unaccountable resemblance of general character in many of the designs, which make use of a combination of arcades, or an arrangement of windows and cornices too directly traceable to the Reform Club, and that the influence of the New Board of Trade is distinctly visible in others, there is still much taste displayed in details; whilst we cannot but recollect that ten years ago we should have had windows without architraves, and a few grecian columns as the sole decoration.

As regards the justice of the selection made, we believe the committee have been anxious to

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